BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Wilton Crutchfield

Wilton Crutchfield was born in Arkansas, April 12, 1939. He was raised on a farm in a family of seven sisters and six brothers. When his parents passed away, he moved to Wyoming where he lived with his sister and worked as a ranch hand before entering the service in 1956.

After Crutchfield's discharge from the Marine Corps in 1958, he moved to O'ahu and worked for Honolulu Transport and Warehouse. He then moved with his first wife to the Big Island where he worked as a logger in Volcano. He was hired at the plantation in 1962, and moved to Pāhāla. He started off as a yard cleaner and worked various jobs including sanitation worker, truck driver, and mill assistant. At the time of the closure of Ka'ū Agribusiness Company in March 1996, Crutchfield was a boiling house worker. In 1981 he remarried.

In 1991 he began growing coffee and is currently in business with a partner for Ka'ū Exports Koffee.

Tape Nos. 26-25-1-97 and 26-26-1-97

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Wilton Crutchfield (WC)

February 9, 1997

Pāhala, Hawai'i

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: Okay, this is an interview with Wilton Crutchfield. We're at his home in Pāhala, and it's February 9, 1997. And the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

Okay, let's start with when and where you were born.

WC: Well, I was born in Paxton County in Arkansas, April 12, 1939. I went to school in Paxton, and then when the school in Paxton consolidated, I went to a place called Sheridan, Arkansas. I went to Sheridan, then I was drafted into the service in '56. And then I went to the service and served my time. And I was stationed in Pearl Harbor and found out Hawai'i had no snakes and that was my home. (HY chuckles.) They had no snakes and no snow, so I decided to stay in Hawai'i [from 1958]. Then I worked construction. Then I met my wife, my first wife, and married her. I found out she is from the Big Island. We wanted to get away from the Honolulu traffic. So we came to the Big Island, and I got a job in a plantation [Hawaiian Agrucultural Company, Ltd. merged with Hutchinson Sugar Company, Ltd. in 1972 to become Ka'ū Sugar Company, Inc., then later was called Ka'ū Agribusiness Company, Inc.]. I did logging first. I was in logging, then the opening came in the plantation, August 23 of 1962. I started working with the plantation. I stayed with the plantation until they closed the doors [March 1996].

HY: Okay. Let's back up again and just—I'd like you to talk a little bit about your childhood in Arkansas. Did you have brothers and sisters?

WC: I had seven sisters and six brothers.

HY: Big family.

WC: We was farmers. We raised cotton.

HY: You raised cotton?

WC: We was farmers.

HY: And you mentioned that your father [Samson Richardson Crutchfield] was a blacksmith?

WC: Yes. He was a blacksmith. That was his profession, a blacksmith. But when as I came along, welding—people got more into welding, so the original blacksmith was a dying business because. . . . Then he had to go into farming to supplement the income. Then the [19]50s, when he died, then I had to go stay with my sister and them in Wyoming and work as ranch hand and so forth until I went in the service.

HY: Did your mother [Alice Crutchfield, née Blake] also work in the farming business?

WC: Yes. My mother was a Choctaw. She's a full-blooded Choctaw and my father was German. And then when my father died, she died of heartbreak afterwards. She had no---she never wanted to live or anything. She just sat down and just wilted away. 'Cause fifty-two years, they never was separated. They was always together.

HY: Where in the birth order are you?

WC: I'm a menopause baby.

HY: A menopause. . . . (Chuckles) No, that's how old your mom was, how old—where were you . . .

WC: She was forty-nine years old when she gave birth to me.

HY: But where were you in—like, were you one of the older kids or. . . .

WC: I was the last.

HY: You were the youngest. You're the baby . . .

WC: I'm the youngest.

HY: . . . of this whole bunch? Okay.

WC: Right. I was a menopause—she thought she couldn't have children. Now, surprise, I came up. 'Cause I'm five---my other brothers and sisters and all them, they're two and three years apart. And I'm six years or seven years below them. So I was like a menopause baby, a surprise baby.

HY: So, from the oldest sibling, there's like . . .

WC: All the way through, they're about two or three years apart. Until I come along, then I came way after the rest. So they was all almost out of the house by the time I come along.

HY: Do you remember working in cotton when you were a child, or did you . . .

WC: Well, when I was old enough, I remember my first job was carrying water to the people who works in the farm. I had to be when they call "water boy." Carry water and let everybody drink water. We had a lot of people working with us, you know, come to work the farm. So my job was water boy. And when as I came older, then I had to go pick cotton. I had to do other kind jobs. Milk the goats, take care the pigs, and take care of the animals as I came

older.

HY: So you had goats and pigs on your farm, too?

WC: Yeah, we had 150 milking goats. And we milked them for the tuberculosis hospital, the lung hospitals. So they used to use goat milk. So my father had a government contract to sell goat milk. Then the other stuff that we raised on the farm—he had a government contract he got during the wartime, Second World War, and that's why everything was sold to the military. So he had a military contract. So even though he got cheaper---but everything he raised, he sold. He won out.

HY: The cotton . . .

WC: The cotton was different. That was with a textile mill. I learned after that textile mill shut down in the South, and went more south towards the Mexican border down in Louisiana, more down towards the border. 'Cause in the central part of the United States, they closed down all the cotton farms. I was gone already when that all happened. 'Cause when I went back in the [19]70s, I saw no cotton in Arkansas, nor in Texas. That was all cotton fields when I was there, when I grew up.

HY: Do you remember what kind of a house you lived in?

WC: Well, it was a typical. . . . Part of it was log, a log house, and part of it was lumber.

HY: How big was it?

WC: I don't know. It was only two rooms to it.

HY: Two rooms?

WC: Only two rooms and the girls used to—we had an attic to it—the girls sleep on one side, and the boys sleep on the other side in the attic. Had a ladder go up. My mother and father slept down below. Anybody make noise, the girls make noise up there, he'd go over there and back and forth. So it was just this two-room building. And was a big wooden fireplace. We did our cooking and everything in the fireplace. We didn't have electricity.

HY: Was the area you lived in mostly farm area or was there a town that was close by?

WC: The closest town to us was about twelve miles away, which is called Sheridan. And Paxton was a community, it was just a farming community. And there wasn't no store or nothing, just a school. Then in the early [19]50s, then the school, they consolidated the school and brought it into a big school, which they did that in Sheridan. All the small counties around that area all consolidated into a big school.

HY: So you finished school there? Or was that after?

WC: I didn't finish school because I didn't make too much good grades. (I attended one year high school in Wyoming.) So when you reach seventeen years old, if you don't make too good grades, they automatically draft you in the service to get rid of you, if you don't keep your

grades up. And I never kept my grades up, so they got rid of me. So that was during the time when they was doing a lot of drafting.

HY: How did you feel about being drafted?

WC: I don't know. I figure, well, go out and see what the world looks like. See what it has to offer. In a way, I was kind of happy because I'd never been out of Arkansas. I never was away from home. And I didn't know what the other part of the world looked like. And it gave an opportunity to open my eyes and see how the other part of the world was like. And once I saw, I didn't want to go back there.

HY: So that was okay with you.

WC: Mainly because, I don't know what the word is—redneck? A redneck, the prejudice. If you Filipino or you Japanese or you're a Mexican, we don't want nothing to do with you. You don't belong in this community. 'Cause I grew up where White is White, Colored is Colored, Mexican is Mexican. They could not mingle. They could not talk to each other. They all had to be segregated. Then when I went in the service, it gave me a chance to find out there was other people outside there, not only one minority group. It gave me a chance to broaden my horizon. What was outside.

HY: Now, you mentioned your mother, what was her ethnicity?

WC: She's a Choctaw.

HY: Is that a Native American . . .

WC: As an Indian, she was, well. . . . In the early 1900s, they started making what they called reservations along the Mississippi River and Missouri and parts of Oklahoma, the northern part of Oklahoma, the Indians that lived in the swamps was called Choctaw. Then the ones that lived outside of the swamps and stuff were called Cherokees. But they made one Cherokee reservation in Wyoming and they throw the Choctaws [and] Cherokees, all into one reservation. They didn't make 'em separate 'cause the Choctaw was a small tribe. And they throwed it all into one in Wyoming. They call it Cherokee. But the Choctaw don't quality for the oil grants and all that the Cherokees has in Oklahoma.

HY: Now, so was that unusual to have—your parents had a mixed marriage then. Was that unusual . . .

WC: Well, that was a mixed marriage, but there was a lot of mixed marriages through the swamps. Where I come from, there's a lot of mixed marriages.

HY: So when you talk about how the different groups, different race groups, were really separate, that did not include . . .

WC: Well, like my parents and my mother and them, our community, we don't mingle with outside communities. We don't mingle. The only time we go to town, maybe we go once a year. We go to town once a year and maybe get a pair of shoes, and we wear 'em around our neck the whole year and brag about we got a pair of shoes. We didn't mingle with outside

world. It was a world in itself.

And religion there was—some people call it Southern Baptist. The religion in that area was called the Essies—it's like a Southern Baptist. They just didn't mingle with outside world.

It's hard to explain where we grew up because we go to town, we don't talk to no one. We weren't allowed to go in a regular restaurant and sit down and eat a meal. We went to a doctor of ours. Took us to the doctor and we'd go back in the old Model T. and go home. We just didn't mingle with outside world.

HY: So within your small, little community you were very much accepted then.

WC: Yeah, because I was born and raised in it. And outsiders don't come into our community. Even if they marry outside—they marry outside, they stay outside. Then when I got married to my wife, my first wife, in 1960, my community disowned me. I was never allowed to bring my wife back into that community, 'cause I married an outsider, 'cause she was Portuguese. And they have no idea what a Portuguese is. But I was not allowed back in the community to set up a home in that community. 'Cause I married an outsider, I'm an outsider, I stay out. Even though I go back now, even I got one Filipino wife now, I can never go back in that community and set up residence because I'm an outsider.

HY: So it's still very much like that today?

WC: It's starting to—well, I went back in '86—and it was starting to take a change. And I went back in '91. You can see a change, but it's not totally switched over. You can start seeing it start to change, but it's not completely where they really mingle with other people. You go into the swamps, it's a totally different world to itself.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about what kind of stuff you did as a kid? Like, just to play?

WC: Well, play with frogs. We go by the river and catch catfish—the typical kids—with a stick and a hook on it. Catch crayfish and typical stuff that kids normally do. Play by the river.

HY: Outside . . .

WC: Like a small, little boat and try to make a boat run on the river. Take ironwood and build 'em like a canoe and watch it sink. Pull it out of the water and go try again. I guess just typical kids, I guess.

But most of our meats, we never used our domestic animals for table use. We use the wild animals for domestic use [home-use meat]. Like deer, bear, raccoons, or possum. What was in the area.

HY: You used those for . . .

WC: For your home use.

HY and WC: For meat.

WC: But domestic meat was sold outside for money to buy flour, or salt, needed things for the house.

HY: So, what kind of animals were considered domestic meats?

WC: Like regular cows, regular commercial pigs.

HY: Was goat?

WC: Goat was a domestic animal, but we never eat the goat. We used them for milking and we sold the milk from that. But we never eat that. If someone come by and wants to buy a goat, then we sell. But we never eat 'em. But we used what we could get out of the forest—the swamps.

HY: What was a typical way of preparing the home-use meats? How would you make it?

WC: Well, when you say home meat, now, when you say venis[on], wild meat, you got to use vinegar, and sage, and other stuff to get the wild smell out. Like ducks and stuff like that, we used to use sage to get the mud smell out of. . . . We marinate 'em overnight with sage and stuff to draw that smell out. It's different from regular commercial meats that we are talking about.

But in the Portuguese---when I married my Portuguese, my first wife, when. . . . The Portuguese call *vinha d'alhos*. They call it *vinha d'alhos*. With my Filipino wife now, they call that adobo. It's the same principle in the curing like they do with the mountain pork that we have here in the Islands, is the same thing they use, the vinegar. Strong vinegar. And the seasonings to draw out that wild smell or the wild taste out of the meat. Like the Portuguese call it *vinha d'alhos,* the Filipinos call it adobo. But we still use the same principle, but I'm not sure what the name was. But we used the strong vinegar, and the sage, and used other herbs to bring out that wild smell from the meat.

HY: When you came here in 1956 . . .

WC: I came here in '58.

HY: I'm sorry, in '58.

WC: I was discharged here in '58 when I was stationed in Pearl Harbor.

HY: So when you first joined the military, where were you?

WC: I was in San Diego, [California]. I took my training in San Diego, and I went Camp Pendleton [California]. And from Camp Pendleton, I was flown to Korea, tail end of the Korean War. And from Korea, I went to Africa. And from Africa, they flew me to Chile. Then from Chile, I was flown down to Falkland Islands. So we was on police call.

HY: Police call.

WC: I was in the [U.S.] Marine Corps, so we was on police call. Like in Arkansas they had the

desegregating the schools, so they called up the Marine Corps to stand guard on the front steps and stuff. But because I was from Arkansas, they throw me in another country. They throw me way aways like in Chile, and Argentina, and Falklands Islands. They didn't put me right in the hometown where I come from. So people from the East Coast was thrown in Arkansas and then they had the big uprising, everything. When the desegregation in Arkansas, you remember, in Little Rock, Arkansas? They had the big demonstration. They called out the National Guard. That was a time when there was so much police action going on. Desegregating of all the schools, and so forth. [In 1957, the Federal Court ordered Central High School in Little Rock to integrate. President Eisenhower sent the U.S. Army and the National Guard to enforce the order.]

HY: So they felt that because you were from that area, you may have a bias? Is that right?

WC: No. Because they were scared that people that was. . . . They didn't want your families to get threatened. If they [said], "Oh, look this guy, we're protesting against the niggers going to our school. Look this guy was born, staying right here. Well, this family's all for the niggers." So they would take it out on the family and burn their houses and do harm to the family. So that's why they get you completely out of the trench. So that's why, if you lived in the area, or if you have known anybody, or if you have any relatives in the area, they did not want you in there. They kept you away. Keep your family from being physically abused. From being burned out.

Well, it was in a [time of] change when there was a lot of stuff. So the same time, it gave me an idea. What is going on? Why are these people trying to kill each other? They tell us all our lives we all brothers and sisters, and we all equal under the Bible. And yet here these guys, they killing each other. And they preach one thing, they telling something else. So it was in a time of my life for see what the other rest of the world was like. Why there's so much hostility in the world. So it was time when I was in the service.

HY: Did you find that all these other places where you were stationed, there was . . .

WC: I didn't find---see, the hostility's there, but in a different way. Like in the Philippines, I find, okay, the Ilocanos, the Visayans, the Igorots, all these people, they had a little bit of transition, but they still mingle with each other. But they don't kill each other. But they can get along. But they don't intermarriage in the Philippines, the different tribes.

And like Japan, some areas, well, like Korea, if you had a *Haole* baby, they would automatically kill the baby or kill the *wahine,* the lady. And then in Japan, they had a big orphan home in Osaka. About three or four thousand kids was from military babies. The Japanese would drop [off] the children and they would take 'em into this orphan home. And it was solely supported by the military.

But they had hostility but not as bad as where I come from. Not as bad as where I come from.

HY: So, made you think a lot about . . .

WC: It made me do a lot of thinking: where I come from, and when I saw different people and different ways. When I came to Hawai'i, Hawai'i had hostility, but not nowheres near what

other places have been in the world. And when I found out there's no snakes here, there's no snow, and the people get along, work together, they work side by side, that was my ideal to stay here and to continue working with the people, regardless of their nationality.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about what you did in the Falklands?

WC: Falklands?

HY: Yeah.

WC: I stood guard. We was out to protect the oil wells there in the military. At the time I was there, Cuba wanted to take over the Falkland Islands. Anyhow [Fidel] Castro [Cuban premier] wanted to take over all that side. And we went there on police action to keep Cuba from coming into Falkland Islands. I don't know why, because that was a godforsaken island. Wind is hundred-something miles an hour and freezing. It was a godforsaken place. We went there to keep Cuba from coming in and taking over the island. All that Central America countries, is to block off Cuba from taking 'em over.

HY: Do you remember any incidences there when you were stationed . . .

WC: Well, we never had no real---we had standoffs but no real crossfire, no. No firing battles. There was a standoff, a standoff. There was nothing that really took place. It was a standoff threat against threat. But wasn't no interest in what we end up getting into a gun battle or full-on battle.

The only battle I had was in Korea along the DMZ [demilitarized zone] line up in the north. We had major battles up there. And every time they blow that little tin horn, I used to dirty my underwear. 'Cause they [North Koreans] come out everyplace. Come across on the DMZ line up in the north. We was all out on the border during the time it was supposed—they say it's peacetime, we signed the peace treaty [armistice signed in 1953]. I said, "How come they never tell all these other guys?" Every time we come back, the son of a guns, they coming across killing and wiping us all out.

Well, when I went up there, it was about 8,000 of us went up and there was only 125 walked out in six months. I said, "Walk out." Hundred and twenty-five of us walked out, out of 8,000.

HY: Why do you think you were one of the 125?

WC: 'Cause I walked out. I partially walked out, but I walked out. On crutches, but I still walked, even though I had lacerations in my hip and my back. But I still walked out. Then when they read off the list of everybody who came and all the people you went to boot camp together, went to San Diego with and Camp Pendleton, you look back, you don't see none of 'em. So when you go on the plane, you go on the cargo plane, you have to carry all the ones you went to boot camp. They carry them onto the plane, all in a plastic bag. So, I don't know why I was spared.

HY: After you left Korea then, where did you go?

WC: I went Philippines, what they call debarkation, to get used to civilization again. Clark [Air Force Base] field. I stayed in Clark Field to get used to civilization. 'Cause we was extremely jumpy and we're very edgy, so we stayed there for a year. And from there, they sent me to Chile, sent me to Falkland Islands and so forth.

HY: Do you remember what you did in Chile?

WC: Same thing. Just guard.

HY: Guarding?

WC: Guard duty.

HY: There were American interests there that you were . . .

WC: American interests there. And they tell us, "Okay, you go by this place and guard this place and you let nobody come through." We would block off the road and we set up roadblocks and that was it. Cars come through, the ones they tell us let 'em come through. And they'd be the regular police reinforcement, the regular police that was there. If the police says, "Don't let the car come through," we don't let 'em come through. If they say, "Let 'em go through," we assist the local police that was in the area. We assist the local police. So they'd run the show and we just enforce what they tell us.

HY: Did you find that the local police and the Americans that were stationed there had a good working relationship or was there some distrust . . .

WC: We never mingle with the local police. We never mingle with the local police whatsoever. We slept in a separate barracks, we never eat together, we never communicate whatsoever. We never went on liberty. We was not allowed to go on liberty in the places we went because we all on special guard duty.

For example, now, if we coming to a military base, and when we come in everybody on that base is scared of us, because they know we coming there for a special reason. Somebody has done something wrong. We come there to pick up somebody. And they won't know who it is. We don't care if he's officer and what his rank is, if we have orders to go there and get someone, we go there and pick him up. Do our thing, take him in. Bring him back for military courts.

So, we was a totally different group. We weren't no regular military police. They sent us, like Osaka. They send us to Guam. They say, "Well, you go this base. You pick up so-and-so and so-and-so for questioning." We go there, we go inside, we salute nobody. We go in, we pick up these people, and we put 'em on the next plane. We go flying back, taking them back to San Diego for questioning, for court-martials. So when they see us come in, we don't salute nobody. Because we're there for a special reason to pick [up] somebody and go back. We was a special force.

But the only reason we got selected in it because [we were] people who could get high clearance. And farmers like where I come from in the South, there was no way. We never knew what communist was, we don't know what gangs is, we never knew what drug gang. So

we got high security because we never knew what this kind of troubles they're talking about, and we did what we was told. That's why we got high security 'cause we didn't get into all this kind trouble. Like in the big cities, they had gangs, and they had drug wars, and they had all this people against people. But where we was at, we didn't have none of this so that's why we got high clearance.

So they run us through [security check] and all of a sudden you in this force. "What kind force this?"

"You in the top of the list. You got top security."

"What the heck you talking about? What is top clearance?"

"Do you know what communism?"

"What is that? Some kind of religion or something?" We didn't know what. So that's why we got top clearance.

HY: So these people that you were in . . .

WC: Assigned to.

HY: Yeah. They had similar backgrounds?

WC: Yes, all country people. Maybe they're from up in Washington State. Maybe they're back in the forest, back in the. . . . You know, they're not regular city people. They're country people. But it doesn't mingle with the city traffic, like drug wars and all this robberies and so forth. They're all in the country. Like us, we have always worked behind a plow. The only kind trouble we ever had is a mule when he go in the wrong direction. When we tell him go left, he went right. That's the only kind trouble we had, behind a plow. So how could we get into trouble? We barely knew how to drive, much less to get into trouble. So that's how we got our clearance. They call 'em a general escort. Was a special force. But we didn't volunteer for it.

HY: They selected you. Yeah. Okay, so then you were discharged in . . .

WC: Pearl. Pearl Harbor.

HY: And you got . . .

WC: I was working Honolulu first, Honolulu trucking outfit [Honolulu Transport & Warehouse Corp.]. Then my wife—I got married right afterwards. And we kinda get hard time because we both working in Honolulu, the cost of living, and traffic, and everything else.

So she said, "Well, let's go to the Big Island. That's where I'm from. Let's go to the Big Island on vacation." Came to the Big Island. I got a job in logging, Volcano. I started working with them and we stayed on. Then after that, I got a job in the plantation, I stayed with the plantation from 1962 until last year, until they shut down.

HY: How did you get your job at the plantation?

WC: By applying for it, and as an opening come along, then I went on what they call probation. They had a six-month probation. Then after six months, then they'd fit you in. And so long as someone doesn't buck you from your job, as the job come up, posted on the bulletin.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about your logging job?

WC: What?

HY: Your logging job. Can you talk about what you did?

WC: Well, I was a. . . . I don't know what you would call it. We called it "skidders." Well, I got involved, first I was behind the saw mill, cleaning the log for prepare for the mill. And from there, I went behind the bulldozer on the choker. I put cables around the log and hook 'em up to the D20 [bulldozer]. . . . They pull 'em to the mill. And then they got into what they call "skidding." This is driving the bulldozer, skidding the logs to the mill.

And from there, the plantation came open, so I quit the job and come to plantation.

HY: Were you living . . .

WC: In Volcano.

HY: . . . in Volcano?

WC: Yes. I was living up on Haunani [Road] that time. I was living in Volcano for the two years I was up there.

HY: And you say your wife is from . . .

WC: Hilo.

HY: Your first wife is from a Hilo . . .

WC: First wife is from Hilo.

HY: . . . Portuguese family?

WC: Yeah. Then I come in the plantation, then in the late [19]60s or early [19]70s I had a problem. Not my wife had a problem. I had a problem because I became abusive, I came. . . . I was an alcoholic. And I fell in love with alcohol more than I did my family, so that's why me and my wife, that's when I got divorced. (Coughs) But it was my fault because I fell in love with alcohol. I came an alcoholic. It took me a few years by going to a AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] program [to] find out what my problem was.

Then after that, I settled down and started a totally different life. In the meantime, she found somebody else and got married to somebody else. (Coughs) I met---through friends I correspond with this Filipino lady I'm with now. I corresponded with her four years. I went

to the Philippines, met her, married her, and brought her back. And we've been married now since '81. I still am not back on the drinking yet. I still don't go back to that bottle. I'm still scared to death of that bottle yet.

HY: Good for you.

WC: I know one drink is too many and 100 not 'nough after, so I don't even take the first one. So since '76 I've been off the liquor. And I don't want to go back. I have no intention of going back to it.

HY: Now, when you first started working planation, what work did you do?

WC: Well, I started off, first job I had was a yard boy at the manger's yard. From yard boy I went into sanitation department. In those days, you pick up—everybody used to put rubbish cans out by the house. And so, we used to go out and empty all the rubbish cans. And if there's dead animals in the neighborhood, a dog or cat crawl under somebody's house and died, our job was to get 'em. And then, if someone died in the community, our job was take the body, put 'em in the washhouse and give 'em a bath, and dress 'em up for the funeral. That was sanitation department.

I went from there, I went truck driver and I stayed truck driver for eighteen years. Then I went into the mill. Then I stayed in the mill until they closed down. So I got total of thirty-three years with the plantation.

HY: When you started with the plantation, you moved to Pāhala, is that right?

WC: I stayed in another camp they call Keaīwa Camp. When I first came here, they had camps all around. Then in late [19]60s, they consolidated all the camps into one. They brought all the camps from outside and brought them down, made Pāhala town. They consolidated and made the town bigger.

HY: So the camp, was that plantation housing they provided for you and your family?

WC: Right, right. They brought all those camps together and centralized the whole town. And when they brought those camps down, the house that we was living in, they provided us first chance to buy the house and the land it went on. Like I bought this house and land. In 1966, I bought this for $4,900.

HY: And this is fee simple . . .

WC: This piece is, 17,000 square feet and the house was 800 square feet. And you have to fix up your own house and do your own.

HY: Did you buy that from . . .

WC: The plantation.

HY: . . . C. Brewer [parent company to Ka'ū Agribusiness Company] then?

WC: Brewer. Then they took it out of my pay. Fifty-two dollars a month out of my pay.

HY: Did a lot of people do that then?

WC: All the houses came down. All of them did. But over a period of time, the people went through divorces, things happened in their lives, changes, lot of people moved out. You know, lot of things happens in people's lives.

HY: Can you describe the first house that you lived in?

WC: What?

HY: In the camp?

WC: Was a plantation house. It was just four bedrooms.

HY: Four bedrooms.

WC: Four bedrooms and like a kitchen on the back. Like a house. And they had the washhouse also out in the back of the house. There was a community washhouse.

HY: Who were the people that lived in that camp? Were they separated by ethnic groups or was it mixed?

WC: What?

HY: Were they separated by different ethnic groups?

WC: Up to the end of—until the [19]50s, camps was divided by nationality, because of nationality. Because of the language between the nationalities, that's why they had fights among themselves. When I say, languagewise, I'll give you example. Like Hawaiian language, when you say *lōlō,* means you're crazy. But in Tagalog language or the Filipino language, when you say *lólo,* you're talking about grandfather. So like in the Portuguese, like the Portuguese family, like my first wife I found *vovó* was grandmother. But *vovo* [WC probably means *bóbo*] in the Filipino language, you stupid. Because of the language that's why they had a lot of conflict. That's why they kept the different people separated until the early [19]50s. Early [19]50s, they started mingling the people together.

HY: So by the time you lived here, the camp you lived . . .

WC: They had already mingled up. They already mixed up together. But they still had quite a few arguments among them, but they still was getting pretty well close, then they start listening to each other. Well, the pidgin language came more a common language among the camps. That's why, like Japanese language in the camps, I know if you use the same language here to the Japanese that come from Japan, they don't understand. 'Cause it's a pidgin language, it's not a true Japanese language. Okinawa language here, they cannot speak it in Okinawa. They don't understand it. It's a totally different language, even though they say it's Okinawa, they say it's Japanese, or they say that's Filipino. But in that particular country, they don't understand. It's a pidgin language. Some more mixed in. 'Cause it's three or four language

into one.

HY: I think I should flip over the tape, okay?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WC: I give you a little bit of story. When I met my Filipino wife, an incident happened that my children's grandmother came by one day. She don't understand too much English. So they talked the Portuguese language. They told the grandmother, "Oh, *Vovó,* welcome to the house."

And I kept watching my wife now, the Filipino one, she was getting mad with the kids. She was getting very upset. I couldn't figure out why. Because we had a good communication with each other. We had no arguments. And why—is she getting jealous because the kids' grandmother come by or what? So after the old lady left, she started scolding the kids. "How come you told the old lady she's stupid, she's dumb?"

And I look at her, I say, "Honey, what are talking about? Their language, *vovó* means grandmother."

"But in my language, no. [*Bóbo*] means you stupid, you crazy."

They weren't criticizing the old lady. They was respecting her. That's where I really found out by firsthand experience why they kept the camps all separated. That's where it really occurred to me. You know, I had heard about it but I hadn't really encountered until it happened in my immediate family that I really got a firsthand experience into it. So I realize that's why they kept the camps all separated.

But I worked. . . . After that, my children, my girl stays in Hilo. She's doing dental. And I got a boy work (construction company). And then I got a boy living in Johnson Island. And I have my small girl here. We adopted her from the Philippines. So I don't know what else to tell.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about what you first started doing when you started at the mill? Just describe your work there.

WC: What I did in the mill, I started off as a oiler. I started off as a oiler and then I started off as a grease man. And I started off on the cleaning plant. Working in the cleaning plant, mill assistant. Then finally, I got into what they call "boiling house." Boiling house is juice processing, cleaning the. . . . Juice, and evaporating the water, getting prepared to make sugar. I stayed in that until they closed down.

Altogether, in the plantation, I did twenty-three different jobs in the plantation. So I don't know if that answered your question. So it's kinda hard. This one job phase out, they push you into another job.

HY: Okay, you said you started out as an oiler and a greaser. Are these . . .

WC: Then the cleaning plant. Then I . . .

HY: Are those jobs---is that having to do with cleaning the equipment? I don't really know what oilers and greasers do.

WC: Oilers is where you go around with a—you check the oil and the gear boxes on the gears on different motors in the mill that running the conveyors and stuff. Checking oil. They call it oiler, but you check oil, grease up, and wash down or keep the place cleaned up. That's oiler, greaser. That's the same thing. On the turbines and so forth.

Then go down the fireroom. We used to push bagasse inside to keep the boiler going to create hot water. Because we used to use the by-product from the cane to cut down the amount of oil we use. We use the by-product from the cane.

Then I got into boiling house, which they strain the juice. Take all the rubbish, mud, and stuff, out of the juice. Then we evaporate the water and turn it into what we call pure cane syrup. Then they use that on the pan floor, and they go through another process to make into granulated.

HY: Now, throughout the years, Ka'u Sugar [Company], there were some periods where they had layoffs. Was your job ever threatened?

WC: They had periods of layoffs. Well, the first big layoff they had was '68, '69. But because of the job that I had at sanitation, no one wanted the job. They didn't want to go pick up the dead dogs on the road or dead cats, go around pick up everybody's rubbish, and clean all the rubbish. 'Cause it was a stinking job and no one wanted it. So, I was saved because no one bucked my job. So all the layoffs came, I was in position that no one wanted the job. I took whatever was available.

By the time I got---over the years, I had enough seniority, I didn't worry about a lower person with less seniority to buck me. But in the beginning, I was saved because of the job I had. No one else wanted to do it. I was saved the first ten years. And after that I had enough seniority, they couldn't buck me. They couldn't buck me out of my job on the layoffs.

HY: You talked a little bit about your earlier problems with alcoholism. Do you feel . . .

WC: Yes, I was very---alcohol.

HY: Did that affect your work at all?

WC: It did. And it cost the company an enormous amount of money. Because of our drinking problem, it would cost the company. Equipment was being damaged. Because a lot of stuff. They didn't want to just up and lay you off. They come through and say, "You, and you, you. Tomorrow morning be on the bus. You going to the AA program. We're going to dry you out. And if you don't show up, you no more job. You fired."

HY: How did you feel when they did that? When they . . .

WC: I was---"They got a problem. I don't have the problem." And, "They have the problem. I don't have. I can control it."

But no. "You be on the bus tomorrow morning. We taking you down the Hilo side. We going put you in and dry out. You caused this problem because every time you call in sick, but you're not sick because you got a hangover and all this. [It] cost us so much time. Overtime, we have to cover for you. You and you and you." There was a, oh, big load of us. They send us all in for dry out.

And over a period of time, about four years. And, god, I just went through my divorce and I was drinking quite heavy then. So over a period of time I figured out what my problem was. From there I totally turned around my life. I figure, well, I've lived here and I got my home here and I don't want to go someplace else. If they tell me go to the AA program, then I'll go to maintain my job and everything. So that's how I got involved with the AA program.

HY: So you started out being resentful of that.

WC: Right.

HY: They sent and then later . . .

WC: But as I went through the program and over a period—and I listened to everybody else. "Man, he's got it under control." I found out he's more out of control than I was. And here I thought I was being cool and I could keep it under control. Found out I was the worst one of the bunch. I was more out of control than everybody else was. So over a period of time, it opened my eyes to what was really going on in my life and I didn't like it so I turned it around. I got rid of alcohol. But if I wasn't forced into it, I probably wouldn't have given it up.

HY: Do you think that is. . . . How do I want to say it? Do you think it was a big problem at that time for the company that there were a lot of people with alcohol problems?

WC: I would say about 95 percent of the people was all very heavy on drinking. It was a big deal. Well, in harvesting, as soon as everybody gets off, say, ten o'clock nighttime or they get off work at 6:30 in the morning, they would have the coolers line up and everybody sit around and drink all day instead of going home and sleep. Then it come time for them to go to work, they couldn't go to work because they was all drunk. And if they go on the equipment, they would have accidents and have a lot of things, the equipment would break down. It was a big problem at that time.

So I don't know who started the program, but they just came out, say, "You and you, don't show up for. . . . Out here and we going dry you out. You an alcoholic." We thought, well, I thought I could handle it. I can quit anytime I wanted to, and I found out I couldn't quit.

HY: The program was obviously successful for you, but do you think it helped . . .

WC: It was very successful with me and at least half of the people that went is still off alcohol, at least half.

HY: So would you say that that program helped a great deal for the whole community in terms of . . .

WC: Yes, at that time. But I was highly disappointed because they discontinued that [program]. But they didn't discontinue it, they changed it around. They let you, as an individual, volunteer for it. An alcoholic, a drug addict, won't volunteer for it unless he going to prison for life. But we was pointed out. "Oh, you got an alcohol problem and you got a drug problem. You go show up over here and you going through the program. Otherwise, we going throw your butt into jail for the rest of your life."

But they stopped the forcible—to force people into it. But now they left it on a volunteer basis, which I disagree.

HY: Why do you think they changed their policy?

WC: They say invasion of privacy. Invasion of privacy.

HY: You think that's a problem [alcoholism] today? Well, obviously, the company's not here anymore, but do you think that was a problem in the . . .

WC: Well, when the company, you say the company not here right now. The company would have been here if they would have continued the program. At the time I went to the—forced into—the AA program, [WC speculates] about ten to fifteen cents of every dollar the sugar made went because of IA [industrial accident]. And it when it shut down, [WC speculates] sixty to seventy cents of every dollar when on (workmen's compensation) [insurance].

HY: Do you think the problem is still here in this community?

WC: It is here, it's tremendous. I see it among the kids. I see a lot of the kids are still on drugs and I see a lot of kids on alcohol.

HY: Why do you think that is?

WC: I don't know. I'm don't think I'm qualified to answer that question. I don't think I'm qualified. But that's why I work with the youth, I work with the FFA [Future Farmers of America], I work with the kids in the church.

If a kid come to me and tell me, "I like money," I'd rather let him go out in the backyard and pick up a five-gallon bucket of nuts and give him two dollars and get two dollars honest and send him on his way. And so they don't have to do nothing. They don't have to steal for it or anything. I make 'em do something for that two dollars to learn how to earn that money. Then they feel good about themselves.

HY: Were there people that actually lost their jobs because even if they went through this program, it wasn't successful with them? You know, you said the company would threaten to get 'em out of there if they didn't sober up.

WC: They did. A lot of people was dismissed. When they [a worker] refused, they [the company] says, "Come Monday, you don't come back." And the house is empty. You out of the

community. And then when they told me go, because I wanted to hang on to my job that's why I went through the program.

At first, for the first couple weeks I was there, I was very disappointed and I was feeling sorry for myself and everything else. But as I realized that I did have a major problem, I needed something to open my eyes and show me where I was going wrong. 'Cause my family, my wife—my wife had already left me. My family left me and I went through a divorce. And I thought all the time she was fooling around with everybody else, keeping everybody happy except me. When I went through it, found out why I got to a state where my family couldn't stand me because of the alcohol. Everything I made went for the alcohol, nothing for the house.

Then I just turned everything around and started all over. To me, I'm very thankful for it as an individual. And most of the---at least 50 percent of the people I know of that went through the program is still off the alcohol. And even other kind drugs. They're off of other kind drugs, too.

HY: Where drugs a problem during that time, too, when you were going through the program?

WC: What?

HY: Were drugs a problem here when you were going to your AA . . .

WC: We had drug problems, but the biggest drug problem we had at that time was marijuana. We didn't have ice, we didn't have cocaine, and we didn't have outside drugs coming in because there wasn't no money to pay for it. So there wasn't too much outside drugs coming in. It was mostly marijuana. And everybody had a small patch in the backyard. And it wasn't buying from outside. And a lot of the biggest problems we had on drugs, marijuana, was certain individual want to make a fortune. They go out and raise, try to make a big patch, a big killing. But they end up spending more time and running from the police and everything else, and they end up losing money instead of making money.

HY: As somebody who didn't grow up in this community, how do you feel that you fit in? Did you feel accepted when you came here?

WC: Well, when I came, I was not accepted. I was not accepted by the local people. Lot of people didn't care for me because of the way I talked and because my values and my moral standings was different from them. I'm accepted but not in the way a local person is yet. Even though I've been here for so many years, I'm still not really accepted in the way that you're thinking about. That I really blend in, no. I can still get that resentment back. I can still feel it.

But I know what my limitation is. Like if I go to a party, I know who I can [tape inaudible], who I can talk to, and where I can stay. I see they start getting rowdy, I start moving away. Because I know, sooner or later, they going start picking on me. When I see they start getting rowdy and they start, I say, "Okay, good night. I'll see you later. I'm going home, sleep." And I go disappear. 'Cause I know I will end up into an argument for an outsider. Because [if] I was a Filipino, or a Japanese, or Hawaiian, I would fit in more. But because I'm a total *Haole* outsider, I don't fit in.

HY: Do you feel that still today?

WC: I'm not really fitted in. I still feel resentment in certain areas.

HY: Do you, in turn, resent others that. . . .

WC: No. If they come to me and tell me, "Oh, I'm having a problem with my coffee. I'm having problem with my coffee. I don't know why my coffee not doing too good." They come over here and they tell me, "Could I come," ask me for advice. I go and fill him in, and advise him. I help him out. I work with him. I go help him out.

But this is like I said. Like my kids is more programmed than I am with the local community. But I'm still an outsider. To certain limits, I'm still an outsider. I don't know if I answered your question or not.

HY: Oh, yeah. Thank you.

WC: And Ed [Edward] Grohs [WC's current business partner] here, he's been here since the [1970s but he's still an outsider. He's still an outsider.

HY: When the plantation actually finally closed last year in March, you had some idea that this was going to happen.

WC: I knew ten years ago.

HY: Why did you feel this way?

WC: Because, one, Mr. Bowman, the manager, told me direct. "Sugar is not going to last. It's on the way out. So if I was you, boy, I'd be prepared for it."

HY: Did that startle you or did you kinda feel that way anyway?

WC: Well, it didn't really startle me. I figure maybe they would stay in business just enough for I can get my retirement. But what they did is shut down four years shy of my retirement. I cannot collect my social security. So I figured they would stay in long enough just where I can catch my social security. I was right on the trim. Only thing is, it fell four years short of my retirement. So four years, I got to struggle now. Then I'll be eligible for my full retirement.

HY: Did he tell that to everybody or was that just a conversation he had with you?

WC: Who?

HY: Bowman.

WC: I don't know. Because I was a personal friend of Mr. Bowman, him and the wife, and a few. . . . I was a personal friend. And Ed Grohs was a personal friend with him. And he said he had made that statement to him, too. As we was talking about it, someone come up and said, "Well, if I was you folks, I'd be prepared because sugar is on its way out." But he

never say when. He said, "It's on its way out."

HY: Ed Grohs is your current partner in your coffee business, [Ka'ū Exports Koffee] right?

WC: Right, right.

HY: And he was also working in the plantation?

WC: He was a supervisor.

HY: Was he your supervisor?

WC: Yeah.

HY: At the mill?

WC: Right. And he also was a---from the mill, they transferred him to [Mauna Loa] Mac[adamia] Nut [Corporation]. He was a processing supervisor for Mac Nut. Then they transferred him to the garage so he was a repair supervisor. Auto parts and get the equipment. Then he resigned his job two years before the plantation went down. He resigned his position.

HY: Did he know they were going to shut down? Is that why he did that?

WC: I don't know what his reason was, but he said that. . . . I know he resigned. Well, he resigned his position. He had a personal problem. I don't care to get into it. He had a personal problem. From the time he found his wife dead, he resigned his position in the plantation. So it was just too much for him.

HY: You had mentioned that from ten years prior to closing, you kinda knew that it might happen . . .

WC: Well, I heard rumors.

HY: You heard rumors. And then you actually . . .

WC: Then in '91, it came available, that piece of land came available. And I leased the land on a year-to-year basis.

HY: Can you talk about how you obtained this land?

WC: Well, through the plantation. And the land came available. Someone was going give up this land 'cause they was leasing from the plantation on a year-to-year basis. I said, "If you're leasing the land, I would like to take over on a year-to-year basis." So I acquired that. I went inside, cleared it, and started planting coffee on it.

HY: And how much land did you . . .

WC: Was five acres.

HY: Five acres?

WC: And I started hand clearing it 'cause the guy before had pasture lot. Had a lot of overgrowth. So I started planting coffee on it, and clearing it. So by the time the plantation shut down, I had about three, or three-and-a-half acres in production.

HY: Why did you choose coffee?

WC: Well, side business, I had been going to Kona, making side money working part-time in coffee and macadamia nut in Kona area. Going picking coffee, working for different farmers as side jobs. So I knew more about coffee and nuts than I did anything else in the outside world. I figured if I can get enough coffee going, I run my own farm and maybe I can survive and tide me over till I can collect my social security. So I was hoping it would stay, the plantation would survive long enough for me to really get set, but it didn't. But I chose coffee 'cause I knew more about coffee than I did anything else.

HY: When you first started clearing the land in '91 and planting . . .

WC: Everybody told me I was crazy.

HY: Yeah.

WC: They condemned me. They told me I was crazy and I was stupid. And because I had a year-to-year [lease]. Because every year I had to renegotiate a new contract and they could pull the rug out from under me anytime. I was hardhead. Even my wife was against me. Everybody was against me. Call me names, stupid.

I went year-to-year and then about six months before the plantation finally closed the door, went in and they gave me a ten-year lease. Gave me a ten-year lease just about six months before. When it came due for a year-to-year lease, they say, "Well, we retain your lease." Everybody felt good because I already got my plants in, now they give me a ten-year lease. Give me more incentive to work forward. So from the time they shut down, I got another ten-year lease. So my lease now is good till 2005.

HY: And at some point, you also obtained more land.

WC: Well, that was only from October of last year. They shut down in March. In October of last year I inquired and they gave me more land and give me a chance to lease more land.

HY: Was that part of the program [C. Brewer offered the displaced workers five acres for farming or fifteen acres for ranching] that they . . .

WC: No, no. [That] one they talking about the five acres free and water free for five years, some people qualifies, says you can't acquire the land, you can't get the land, five acres, unless you have been laid off. And by the time we got it all---by the time everything had finished, we never got our five acres until January of this year. By the time I [got] my five acres was January of this year.

HY: So, just last month.

WC: Yeah.

HY: Oh, I see. So, the land that you obtained in October, then, was through—how did you get that land?

WC: Through leasing of the plantation. That was already throw away---that was cane fields that was coming out of the cane fields. I inquired about it and they gave it to me. But it's separate from the five-acre parcel.

HY: I see. Are all your parcels separated or are they together?

WC: (Sighs) They're separated. They're separated.

HY: And are you planting coffee on all of it?

WC: No. On the five acres, I never plant no coffee 'cause on the agreement on the five acres free, they got two clauses inside there. They got one inside, no papaya and no coffee. Because papaya has infestation and coffee, before you can really make money on coffee, it's gotta be more than five years. So it's not feasible to do coffee. But on the other parcels I got from the plantation, because one I got for ten years and one I got a fifteen-year lease, it's feasible to do coffee.

HY: So can you tell me what you're going to do with the five acres that you got that you won't be planting coffee on? What will you do with that land?

WC: Well, I got this guy, (Mike) Zelco, coming out to my farm, Hilo someplace. And he saying if I want to, I can put in white pineapple. Dole Corporation's offering white pineapple. They'll furnish you the seed, they'll furnish part of the financing to develop it and guarantee us market.

And another one, the taro growers association is talking about taro. And another person (Mike Zelco) has offered ginger.

So I got to figure what we going to do because right now, there's four of us got five-acre parcel together. He get his five acre, I got mine, and everything. So we plant one in taro, we plant one in ginger, one we don't know what we're going to do with. But mine, I'm thinking about pineapple. So we left one lot open. So we're still playing both ways. But we, four of us, work together on the land.

HY: What is it about white pineapple that . . .

WC: It's a white pineapple. Dole Corporation said they have a white pineapple. I'm not sure whether---some people say it's a Maui pineapple but they said the meat is white. And it's much sweeter, and more juice, and they use 'em for salad and stuff for the hotels. But Dole Corporation has offered us free seed. They offered us the plants, they offered to help furnish us the fertilizer to raise white pineapple and also guarantee marketing for it. So I'd like to check it out. If they going give me the plants, they going [to give] me the fertilizer, help me put it in, I'm willing to try for it. And they say it's a one-year to eighteen-months crop. So why not?

But the ones I have leased [earlier] from the plantation, besides the five acres, I have all coffee. I have nothing else. That's all coffee.

HY: You've already harvested?

WC: Well, I planted in '91, so I've. . . . Last year, I had a pretty good harvest, so it's coming up now. I've got about three-and-a-half acres in production now. So I've already started creating my own market now. I already got my market established. So I'm going from cherries to finished product. I'm sending to central United States, West Coast. And as the acres increase, I've been offered to come to Guam to talk to the air force in Guam. They're interested in buying, getting a government contract. So if I can get a government contract, at least I can move everything.

HY: I want to kinda back up again. You mentioned that you corresponded with your wife, your second wife, before you got married. Now, is she a picture bride?

WC: No. I had some people who was working with me and the niece came from the Philippines. And I was interested in corresponding with a pen pal. At that time when I had changed my life around, I was doing Cherry Blossom pen pal, corresponding with ladies from other parts of the world—Mexico, Honduras, Germany, Switzerland, corresponding. But something in the words, the letters, didn't come out right. I never continue because never come out right.

Then when I corresponded with my wife now, we never did talk about marriage. That was the part that helped. Other ones, after you get the second letter from them, "When you going come pick me up to take me back over there? When you going to marry me?" But this one, we never did talk about marriage. We was just friends.

Then we corresponded from about four years and I decided I saved enough money together and I went to the Philippines and we met. And we spent---I stayed in a hotel in the Philippines and she come to the hotel with her aunty guys. And we talked and so forth. Then we decided to get married. But it was never through corresponding.

HY: How was it that you began your correspondance with her?

WC: Through a friend, niece came from the Philippines. The niece and my wife worked together in the Philippines in the municipal agricultural department in the Philippines. They was working together.

HY: So you knew the niece?

WC: The niece. And she's living in Anchorage, Alaska now. Of course, few years ago, she left here and went to Anchorage, Alaska. The brother works for Bumble Bee? Salmon factory? So her brother work there, so their family moved up there because of the jobs. 'Cause the plantation shut down, no jobs here, so they went to Anchorage, Alaska. They was just here last month on vacation.

HY: Maybe you can talk about the last day of closing. How did you feel on the last day?

WC: Very hurt, disappointed. I've attended funerals that never hurt me as bad as it did that time. It

was a very, very. . . . I was disappointed because I figured, last minute, they would change their mind. Last minute, ethanol was going come. They was talking about ethanol coming into the—make an alcohol factory. I thought up to the last day they had hope. Well, when they finally throwed the hat in, they throwed the lei, I was depressed, very depressed. But I thought they had hope.

HY: They had held a vote with the union [ILWU, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] workers [and] were asked to vote on whether they would accept a pay cut or not.

WC: See, on the pay cut, a lot of your Filipinos are people that didn't speak too good a English was misled. They were misinformed. Because the ones that understood voted for a pay cut. But the ones that didn't speak too good a English and everything did not really know what was going on. And the ones who translated to them misinformed a lot of people. There was a misunderstanding.

HY: Who was misinforming these people? Was it the union or was it . . .

WC: Union? It wasn't union, it was so-called friends.

HY: So, it was other workers?

WC: Well, it was all union members, but, say, one Filipino, he translate to his Filipino friends, the language. He didn't understand what he was really translating. By the time he got around and we got back, it was a totally different story than what the reality was. There was a misunderstanding among themselves.

HY: Do you think they understood that the plantation would close if they voted not to accept the pay cut? Do you think they understood that?

WC: Well, they figured it was a bluff. Over the years that I worked with the plantation, I had took a pay cut and many, many times the company had threatened to close the doors but they didn't. They thought it was another one of those bluff things. They thought it was another bluff. They didn't know that they really mean it.

HY: So, were a lot of people quite surprised then?

WC: Right. Well, when they went around, they said, "No, we're not going take another vote. That was it. You said this." And they said, "Certain-certain day, we're closing."

"Oh, we don't have a chance to change our mind?"

"No. You made your decision. That's it."

HY: When did they give you notice that . . .

WC: Oh, about January, end of January, or February, about two months before they closed the door.

HY: Did they give you a date and say, at this time, no more?

WC: Well, let's take it back. It was over a year. More than a year. 'Cause we took a vote and everything. I lost track of time over there. All right, when they closed, they said they would not take a pay cut and everything else. They said, okay, they going close the door. Okay, everybody look at each other and say, well, what about this, what about that? Then, the following week on a Monday, cultivation went to work. No job. "You voted 'no,' we're not plant nothing, we not going fertilize, we not going take care nothing. You're out."

But they thought they had a six-month trim or slowdown, but no. They just closed the door. Well, "We're not going continue planting. We're not going—" Equipment, they brought all equipment in, parked it. You're out.

It's just from one decision to another was so fast. It's hard to really. . . . Like cultivation was laid off for maybe a year, almost two years, before we was laid off. Cultivation. Because they stopped the fertilizing, and they stopped the planting of seed cutting, and the preparation of the field. They was laid off way before.

I was to the end because I took care of juice. As long as that juice come to the mill, I had a job. So, over a period of time, it was cut back. But once they made the decision, one week later, they closed the door. They started going through, but. . . .

But until the last day, it was maybe two years. In the two years, the last two years that I worked in the mill, I was stressed. The pressure as an individual, I ended up with a heart attack. I end up with major heart attack, kidney trouble, gallbladder trouble. I was just physically and mentally exhausted.

The last four months of my working with the plantation, I end up [The] Queen's [Medical Center] hospital with angioplasty. I had two angioplasties, had a gallstone operation. Then after they finally closed the door of the plantation, my health improved completely 'cause I was not under that stress. 'Cause they kept laying people off, but they wasn't replacing. They was making us cover for the job. Cover for 'em.

So everybody was in, say, boiling house—I cannot say for the mill, I can't say for the other departments—but in boiling house, everybody in the boiling house had a heart attack or had a stroke in the last six months of the plantation.

HY: How many people worked in the boiling house?

WC: Total of about thirteen, fourteen people. But everybody in that boiling house had a stroke or heart attack.

HY: You're saying thirteen or fourteen people had . . .

WC: Everybody who worked in boiling house, including the foremen, superintendents, all had major health problems the last six months because of the amount of pressure.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 26-26-1-97; SIDE ONE

HY: This is a continuation of the Wilton Crutchfield interview.

You were talking about just the stress of working in the mill.

WC: The last six months.

HY: The last six months.

WC: In the mill. Everybody had major---all in the boiling house side, all had heart attacks, had strokes. They all went down. And they wouldn't hire no one to take the next guy's place, so you have to double up with that one while he go to the hospital and come back. They wouldn't hire no one to take a place.

HY: Do you attribute that mostly to the anxiety of . . .

WC: It was the stress that we was under.

HY: The amount of work that you . . .

WC: Amount of work, and the lack of rest, the pressures we was under, the condition we was working under. We tell them we need bearings for the motors and stuff, they would not buy bearings for us. They wouldn't buy us metal to do repairs. Plumbing, we had scrounge pipe out of the rubbish dump to keep the plumbing together, the pipes together. It was just mental fatigue and everything was just going downhill.

HY: What about other areas of the plantation?

WC: I can't speak of the other areas because I was so busy worrying about my own areas, I had no time to go in somebody else's area. I listen to other people talking. All areas had their major problems. All departments had their major problems, not only boiling house. The mill had theirs, cleaning plant had theirs, fireroom had theirs. Everybody had their own major problems. But to what extent, I was too busy in my own department to worry about somebody else.

HY: You had mentioned that earlier, actually, you had accepted a pay cut? Did I understand that right?

WC: We would have---we had in early [19]70s we had took a dollar cut.

HY: A dollar an hour cut?

WC: We took a dollar cut, then they made a bumper crop and then they gave it back to us again. We had took in the [19]70s, then we . . .

HY: Now, did you vote on it in the . . .

WC: Yes. We did vote on it. But this last pay cut they talked about, I voted in favor of it for the company to survive. But everyone that voted against it was misinformed. It was people that did not understand what they was really. . . . Didn't understand what they was reading and they was listening to other people that supposed to be educated explaining to them. And the people who explained to 'em didn't understand what was going on. It was a misunderstanding. But I voted for the pay cut. As long as the plantation would survive. Because I been here so long, I didn't want to move, I didn't want to go out of the community, I voted for it.

HY: Do you think some of those people regret that now?

WC: There's lot of 'em that regrets it now. But it's too late. And we never had a second chance at it. But I would say most of it was a misunderstanding. But I don't know if was the union that did it, or the company did it. I'm just saying I was so busy worrying about my own department, to keep my department going, I didn't have time to go around (coughs) and listen to what was going on in the community. They had a lot of meetings, and lot of the meetings I did not attend because I was too busy trying to keep my department going.

I listen to the meetings, there was a lot of arguments. And lot of it, I did not understand what they was talking about it because I'm not a highly educated man. And the stuff they talking about, Mexico bringing in sugar, open the gates for Mexico 'cause they bringing in sugar from Mexico, they bringing in from Taiwan, I didn't understand what they're talking about because that's totally different from what my immediate concern was. Because I'm here in Hawai'i and I don't understand what's going on in Mexico and all this other kind place. That's totally outside world for me.

So, I don't know if they was misunderstood or what. But as long as the company could survive a little bit longer, I accepted the pay cut. Because I did not want to move. I've been here so long.

HY: So you had said that you felt the last day you were quite disappointed and . . .

WC: I was very disappointed. I've attended funerals, but that day was worse than a funeral to me. That last day. And a lot of people showed stress at that time. But what you going to do? You couldn't do nothing. Aloha, you know, down the line, that was it.

HY: What kind of support have you gotten from, say, the company? You mentioned, you know, you just received the five acres in January.

WC: I have not got no support from nobody. I hear people say, "Oh, the company doing this. The union doing this. So-and-so doing this." But indirectly, support or help, I have not received none of it.

HY: Did they offer severance pay for you folks?

WC: They gave us severance pay, but we end up with about five days out of the nine days that we had coming. Me, I got twenty-three thousand something. Top figure. By the time it came into my hand, I end up with only $8,000. By the time they took out federal and state [taxes], social security, Medicare, and all this, I end with little over $8,000 in my pocket.

HY: What about unemployment insurance? What do you . . .

WC: I had six months. I collected six-months unemployment. But now, I don't collect nothing. I don't qualify for that. But as far as welfare, I don't qualify for welfare because I have assets and my wife is still working. So I don't qualify for all your government assistance, or medical insurance, or housing, and all this. I don't qualify. 'Cause right now, I'm a spouse, I'm living off of my wife.

HY: You told me where she works and I've forgotten. Was that mac nut . . .

WC: She work for Mac Farms [of Hawai'i, Inc.]. She's a lab analyst.

HY: [Is that] part of C. Brewer's . . .

WC: No. That's [an] Australian company (owned by Campbell Soup). And they have macadamia nut here, and then California they got almond, dates. And they got processing plants in California, southern part of California. Almond and dates, and health food. They process---they got nut factory by Kona side.

HY: Do you have medical insurance through your wife now?

WC: (Yes.) Through my wife. I'm a spouse. So I have my insurance through her. 'Cause I'm not working so there's no place that has medical available for me. If I was working someplace, then if they have medical, I have to join their team. But since I'm not working, she's working to have medical so the spouse can come in on it. So my daughter and I, I'm on my wife's medical.

HY: How long has she been working?

WC: She's been working since (August '82).

HY: Oh, okay. She was working throughout your time at the plantation?

WC: What?

HY: You had two incomes while you working at the plantation.

WC: Right. She was with Mac Farms since (August of 1982).

HY: What about support from the church? Have you received any support from your church?

WC: (No.) Well, our church right now is—all religion in the community is on a downfall. Because even the churches here in the community, they can't survive unless they get tithes. And there's no tithes or money support. And the churches here is suffering because the community has no money so who's supporting it? As far as the Catholic church, the minister here, he takes care of two communities. The minister take care of two communities. So he's preaching---he take care of Pāhala and he take care of Nā'ālehu. And some of the other ones, they take two or three communities into one. Because one community cannot support themselves. They cannot afford it. Even the Assembly of God minister, he don't get his

salary. He gets only about a third of his salary. There's no more money in the community.

So, spiritualwise, it's up, but when you say support, I can't speak for the other churches, but Assembly of God, we doing whatever we can. We do whatever we can with the community. We have more children than we do adults. We got about a hundred and twenty-five kids, and adults I think we got about twenty. So we struggle and we make fund-raisers to send the kids to camps to keep the kids occupied as much as we can.

So there's not no real support that a Christian organization can offer 'cause there's no economic—there's nothing here for 'em. Because there's nothing here.

HY: Do you find that a source of emotional and, you said, spiritual support?

WC: Emotional, this town is still in a state of shock. Even though it's been almost a year. It's still in a very, very shock. And it's getting worse now ever since the six-months period is over from unemployment [insurance]. Theft is at enormous high. They getting among themselves. Family against family. Brothers against brothers. It's really getting down and dirty right now in the community.

HY: Is the crime rate higher?

WC: It has jumped by quite large since the—it's jumped quite large. 'Cause I've talked to the captain here and he says he has tripled his police force twice since the plantation shut down.

HY: What kind of crime?

WC: Vandalism, robberies, property damage, and so forth.

HY: Do you think that's a direct result of the plantation closing?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: Okay. You were just talking about. . . . I had asked you if the crime rate may be a direct result of plantation closing.

WC: I would say most of it is because there's nothing for the kids to do and the people to do. They don't know how to survive without the plantation. They've always had someone to lean on. There's nobody to lean on now.

HY: How do you think the closing has affected your home life?

WC: My home life, it has affected my home life, but not as bad as lot of people because I was a little bit prepared for it. I had started before and I got a little prepared for it. It has affected me right now because I just gotta watch out how I spend my money and so forth. There's only one income now and there's not two incomes like I had before. So until we get our farm going, until we start really turning over money in the farm, right now we just gotta watch all our spending.

But I'd say, right now, with my family, I came much closer because I spend more time with

my family than I did before. Because we was always in too big a rush, we never spent no time together. Usually, if I'm sleeping, she's working. And if I'm working, she's sleeping. So we had very little time together. It gives me more time with my family.

HY: What about your kids? Now, you have one daugh—is it one daughter at home?

WC: Adopted daughter.

HY: Adopted daughter. Has she expressed any concern about this? Or how aware of this do you think she is?

WC: She hasn't really thought about it too much because she's at a younger age where . . .

HY: How old is she?

WC: She's ten now. So, she's at a young age, so it's really not. . . . 'Cause there's still income coming in. She still gets what she wants. She still gets her—she needs clothes, she needs something, she still gets all her stuff, so she's not really under pressure like some families were. Some families, they don't get what the kids want. But the things that she needs, she still gets. So, to her, there's no change. Only change is, got the old man around to grumble with her more often. Give her hell on her homework all the time, which she's not used to her father doing before—helping her with her homework, grumble with her because she make mistake on her math and so forth.

HY: So you say that you actually feel a little closer to your family?

WC: Yes. Because we've spent more time together. We are more close.

HY: What about your relationship with other people in the community? Has that changed at all?

WC: I don't know 'cause I don't mingle too much with the community. Unless they come direct to me, then I'll mingle. But right now, I'm busy trying to get a farm going, and I go *talk story* a little bit, but I'm busy trying to get a farm going. I don't have time to go around and listen to gossip.

HY: Has your wife expressed concerns about the closing? Now, you got very ill and you lost your job. How did that affect her?

WC: It affected her because she had to be the sole breadwinner. And the only reason I cannot get a job outside because I have a history of heart trouble. No one will consider hiring. I can't find a job outside. So, as soon I write down, oh, I had heart trouble, they won't interview you, they won't even *talk story* with you. "Oh, you overqualified," and that's it. No one will even *talk story* with me because I have a history of heart trouble. So that ends my. . . . No sense I go down to unemployment [office]. I fill out the card every week and send it in, I don't get nothing back but I still go through the formalities. They tell, "Well, got a job opening," and I go to the job opening.

"Oh," they say, "how's your health?"

"Well, I had a heart attack."

"Oh, you over qualified," and that's it. That's the end of the conversation.

Sometimes it last five minutes, sometimes a little bit longer, and that's it. Soon as I get to the part, "I've had a heart attack," I'm a medical risk for them. So, I'm a medical risk.

So, my wife tell me, "Well, never mind. We struggle. We do what we can and we keep on going. We struggle now for four years, then you get your social security, then we'll be okay. But for four years, five years, we'll struggle it out."

I mean, that's the only thing, we gotta learn to live on one budget.

HY: What do you see for the future of this community?

WC: (Sighs) I don't really see a future that. . . . Not in the way it used to be. There's nothing here to really hold no one. There's nothing here for the tourists to see. So, I don't see no future, real future, unless they get some drastic change in the community. Even the farmers, people that accepted the land from the plantation, the way I see, there's about between thirty and forty people has accepted the five acres. Two years from now, if there is five left, I'll be surprised.

HY: Why is that?

WC: They're not farmers. They don't program the activity. They're not farmers. They hit and run. As time gets along, they have no money to support themselves. No backup. It's a totally new set of concepts in life. It's totally new to them. I doubt if they're going to survive unless they learn very quick. Like coffee, you prepare the ground, you put 'em in the ground. As soon as [you] plant the tree, you gotta wait three years before you make money. How they going survive in that three years? That's my question. How you going survive in the three years if you have no money?

If they get past that three-year stage, then they get chance. But because of the long period, I don't know how they going to survive.

HY: Is there anything else that you want to . . .

WC: I don't know.

HY: . . . would like add? Okay.

WC: Not that I know of. Unless you have any kind of question.

HY: No, I think that's. . . . I thank you very much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

THE CLOSING OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS:

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